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IMAGINING FRONTIER GOVERNMENTALITY: RIAZ HASSAN'S *THE UNCHOSEN* AS A JANUS-FACED BORDERSCAPE

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Abstract
This article examines Riaz Hassan's *The Unchosen* as a Janus-faced literary critique of frontier governmentality and the colonial legal regime known as the Frontier Crimes Regulation (FCR). Drawing on Benjamin Hopkins's concept of *frontier governmentality*, the article argues that the FCR functioned not merely as a juridical code but as a spatial and epistemological tool designed to inscribe the tribal borderlands as zones of permanent exception. By reading *The Unchosen* through the lens of border poetics, the study explores how the novel subverts the imperial frontier discourse that justified the FCR under the guise of customary autonomy and indirect rule. The narrative constructs a Janus-faced borderscape in which resistance and complicity are inseparably entangled, revealing how colonial legality corroded tribal cohesion and reconfigured indigenous governance. Through testimonial memory, narrative fragmentation, and affective silences, Hassan's text challenges the authority of the colonial archive not by offering a coherent counter-history, but by foregrounding the lived contradictions and moral ambiguities of exceptional legality. The novel's subaltern voice—ambivalent, fractured, and at times deliberately opaque—resonates with Gayatri Spivak's notion of epistemic violence and Aleida Assmann's theory of restorative memory. Ultimately, *The Unchosen* functions as a narrative borderscape that reclaims agency in a landscape disfigured by imperial cartography and legal design. By tracing these discursive and aesthetic tensions, the article contributes to the interdisciplinary intersection of postcolonial literary studies, legal history, and cultural border theory.

INTRODUCTION

In the colonial annals of the British Raj, the tribal frontier that bordered Afghanistan and British India emerged as a space that was as ideologically charged as it was legally anomalous. The introduction of the Frontier Crimes Regulation (FCR) in 1872 and its subsequent expansion in 1901 marked a crucial juncture in the transformation of this border zone into a permanent site of legal and political exception. Ostensibly justified as a pragmatic mechanism for maintaining order among "unruly" tribal populations, the FCR institutionalised a regime that suspended due process, legal representation, and habeas corpus in favour of collective punishment, delegated justice, and administrative discretion. Under the cloak of respecting tribal autonomy, the British colonial state installed what Benjamin D. Hopkins has theorised as *frontier governmentality*—a mode of indirect rule that managed violence, delegated authority, and sustained imperial control while avoiding direct legal accountability.

This article examines *The Unchosen* by Riaz Hassan as a literary deconstruction of the imperial logic that produced and legitimised the FCR. Set in the turbulent landscape of the North-West Frontier, the novel narrates the experience of Abdul Hakim Khan, a tribal elder whose life is fractured by the structural violence and moral ambiguities of British colonial rule. Through a counter-discursive fictionalisation of frontier history, Hassan's novel lays bare the epistemic underpinnings of the FCR as an exceptional legal regime and exposes its corrosive effects on tribal identity, ethics, and governance. Rather than depicting the border as a static territorial line, *The Unchosen* reimagines it as a lived and narrated *borderscape*—a term borrowed from cultural border studies to denote the material, affective, and symbolic fields through which borders are constructed, experienced, and contested.

This article proposes that *The Unchosen* offers a Janus-faced representation of the frontier—a space at once shaped by collaboration and resistance, visibility and opacity, legal inclusion and juridical abandonment. In doing so, it mobilises what Johan Schimanski terms *border poetics*—a literary mode that interrogates the discursive architectures of borders and opens up alternative imaginaries of spatial belonging. By situating *The Unchosen* within the theoretical frameworks of *frontier governmentality*

(Hopkins), the *state of exception* (Agamben), and *Janus-faced borders* (van Houtum), this study demonstrates how the novel intervenes in colonial legal history not by supplying a rectified counter-narrative, but by staging the fragmentation and silencing produced by colonial law itself.

The analysis proceeds in five sections. First, it traces the colonial discourse of tribal exceptionalism that underpinned the British legal justification for the FCR. Second, it analyses the structure and logic of frontier governmentality as embedded in the FCR and as depicted in the figure of the Political Agent in the novel. Third, it engages the concept of the Janus-faced border to examine how the novel portrays the moral fragmentation and coercive complicity engendered by imperial indirect rule. Fourth, it interprets the novel's narrative form as a poetics of affective memory, silence, and resistance. Finally, it concludes by reflecting on the broader implications of reading colonial legality through literary borderscapes: what does it mean to remember, fictionalise, and refuse empire on the terms that law once forbade?

By combining postcolonial literary analysis, legal theory, and border aesthetics, this article argues that *The Unchosen* offers not only a critique of British frontier governance, but also a deeper reflection on the aesthetic and psychic scars left by the juridical architecture of imperial exception.

Imperial Discourses of Frontier Exceptionalism

British imperial rule in the North-West Frontier of India was justified not only through the force of arms but through a persistent and evolving discourse of tribal exceptionalism. From the aftermath of the First Anglo-Afghan War (1839–42) onward, British colonial administrators, missionaries, soldiers, and travel writers began to portray the frontier region—particularly the Pashtun tribes—as inherently unruly, violent, and resistant to civilisation. The region was imagined in British writings as a liminal space: not fully part of the empire, yet too dangerous to leave outside its control. This conceptualisation served as the ideological foundation for a range of legal and administrative policies that rendered the frontier simultaneously external and internal, visible yet ungovernable, familiar yet fundamentally Other.

The introduction of the Frontier Crimes Regulation (FCR) must be understood within this discursive matrix. Framed as a response to the "peculiar" customs and character of the

tribes, the FCR was not applied to the rest of British India but only to those frontier districts deemed unassimilable to normal civil governance. In this sense, it functioned as a juridical manifestation of the idea that the tribal borderland required an exceptional legal regime—one tailored to its supposedly pre-modern conditions. The British constructed the tribes as both autonomous and infantile: worthy of self-regulation through jirgas and tribal elders, but in need of constant oversight through Political Agents and imperial coercion. This contradictory logic enabled the colonial state to justify collective punishment, preventive detention, and the suspension of judicial due process without appearing to contradict its broader liberal-legalist claims.

The Unchosen engages this discourse of exceptionalism not through direct polemic, but through affective narrative and testimonial irony. Abdul Hakim Khan, the novel's protagonist, recalls how British officers would arrive "with gifts and leave with maps," teaching their laws while punishing the memory of tribal ones. The symbolic economy at work here is double: exchange is framed as generosity, but it is undergirded by surveillance and appropriation. The Pashtun are constructed in imperial terms as both guests and threats—welcomed into the fold of imperial attention only when sufficiently pacified, and excluded when defiant. This dual status is emblematic of what Henk van Houtum has called the *Janus-faced* border, which "simultaneously includes and excludes, civilises and abandons" (van Houtum 132).

Crucially, the imperial archive constructed the border not only in spatial terms but in civilisational ones. As Benjamin Hopkins notes, the British frontier was "not merely a geopolitical boundary but a cultural marker that defined the limits of the governable" (Hopkins 5). By representing the tribes as beyond the pale of rational legal subjectivity, the British legitimated an exceptionalism that was at once geographic, juridical, and racial. In *The Unchosen*, this is countered by a narrative that refuses to stabilise the border as either inside or outside. Instead, the novel dwells in the interstitial—between law and lawlessness, memory and erasure, voice and silence. Hakim's memories frequently expose the fissures in colonial logic: the same jirga that is portrayed by the British as an emblem of tribal autonomy becomes, in his telling, an instrument of co-optation. "I was appointed as a member of the jirga," he recalls, "this was the British strategy to subdue us from within" (Hassan 74).

This narrative exposure of the mechanisms of colonial discourse also gestures toward what Edward Said identified as the imperial will to knowledge: the desire to catalogue and control not only territory but culture and consciousness. The British imagination of the frontier as a zone of chaos and incivility required a simultaneous erasure of indigenous epistemologies and historical memory. In this regard, *The Unchosen* acts as a counter-discursive borderscape—one that reclaims the representational space occupied by colonial authority and fills it with the voices, silences, and traumas that the imperial archive excluded.

By foregrounding the emotional residue of colonial encounter—through grief, disorientation, and moral conflict—the novel reconfigures the frontier not as an imperial periphery, but as a contested centre of meaning. It stages the border not as a territorial line, but as an epistemic and affective terrain shaped by competing discourses of order and exception, loyalty and betrayal, law and violence. Within this terrain, the colonial justification for the FCR appears not as an inevitable administrative necessity, but as a deliberate fiction—a legal architecture erected on the scaffolding of racialised and strategic misrepresentation.

FCR as a Legal Regime of Frontier Governmentality

The Frontier Crimes Regulation (FCR), formally enacted in 1872 and modified in 1901, was far more than a set of punitive legal codes—it was a sophisticated mechanism of colonial control that exemplified what Benjamin D. Hopkins has termed *frontier governmentality*. This concept, drawing on Foucauldian notions of governance, refers to a strategy by which the colonial state governs a region not through direct incorporation or full juridical equality, but by maintaining it as a zone of exception—intensely managed yet structurally excluded from normative legal rights (Hopkins, 2015). In the context of the British Indian frontier, frontier governmentality allowed the state to enact forms of sovereignty without assuming the burden of accountability. It enabled a regime that was at once authoritarian and deniable, legalistic and extralegal, paternalistic and violent.

At the heart of this regime stood the Political Agent: an imperial functionary endowed with quasi-judicial, administrative, and military powers. His authority extended beyond that of a judge or district officer; he could order arrests without warrants, punish entire villages for the actions of one individual, and override local customs when deemed

necessary. While appearing to honour tribal autonomy by convening jirgas and deferring to local leaders, the Political Agent operated as the hinge between British surveillance and tribal subjugation. In *The Unchosen*, this figure appears in spectral yet pervasive form—never fully personified, but always present in the decisions that shape lives, exile families, and reorient the moral universe of the tribal community.

The novel offers a sustained, if oblique, commentary on the architecture of frontier governmentality. Abdul Hakim Khan recounts the moment he was appointed to the jirga: "The British officer handed over the charge of administration to the tribal elders… they were made responsible for controlling their own people" (Hassan 69). On the surface, this appears to be a delegation of power. But beneath this gesture lies a deeper imperial logic: by reconfiguring tribal structures into instruments of surveillance and compliance, the British preserved plausible deniability and decentralised blame. This tactic rendered the colonial violence less visible, while entrenching it more deeply within the social fabric. The jirga, traditionally a deliberative body for resolving disputes and maintaining communal harmony, is thus transformed into a double agent of imperial legality. In *The Unchosen*, Hakim expresses ambivalence about his participation: "I was appointed… this was the British strategy to subdue us from within" (Hassan 74). His statement functions as both a confession and a critique. It exposes how the colonial state exploited the credibility of indigenous institutions to legitimise domination. The frontier governmentality of the FCR did not merely impose an external order; it rewired internal codes of honour, consensus, and accountability. Hakim's position as both a victim and reluctant collaborator mirrors the condition of an entire polity ensnared within the legal fiction of delegated autonomy.

This form of governance also reshaped the contours of responsibility. Under the FCR's collective punishment clause, entire tribes could be fined, disarmed, or displaced for the alleged offences of a few. As Giorgio Agamben argues in his theorisation of the *state of exception*, such regimes function by suspending the rule of law precisely in order to preserve the sovereignty of the state (Agamben, 2005). The frontier thus became a laboratory of exceptional legality, where subjects were rendered punishable without being properly juridical persons, and where the very definition of law was contingent upon the colonial administrator's discretionary will.

The Unchosen renders this structure of exception not as an abstract condition but as an intimate, lived reality. The disintegration of tribal unity, the conversion of elders into informants, the pervasive fear of betrayal—all are depicted not merely as consequences of political conflict but as effects of legal design. Hakim's voice reflects the internalisation of this structure: "We were forced to leave our birthplace and migrated to another place… I was separated from my mother, brothers and sisters" (Hassan 31). This sentence collapses the political and the emotional, showing how frontier governmentality inflicted dislocation not only on bodies but on kinship, memory, and ethical coherence.

The affective weight of such disintegration is palpable throughout the novel. It reveals what the FCR did not declare in legal language: that its primary function was to convert the border zone into a space of moral paralysis, where survival itself became complicit with subjugation. The structure of indirect rule worked not by erasing indigenous authority, but by fragmenting it—turning tribal leaders into co-opted administrators, and legal forums into theatres of imperial discipline.

By weaving this reality into its narrative structure, *The Unchosen* resists the illusion of frontier neutrality perpetuated by colonial legal discourse. It shows how law, when deployed through frontier governmentality, becomes indistinguishable from violence, and how governance without rights is still a form of absolute power. The novel's contribution, therefore, is not only to illuminate a historical injustice, but to expose the aesthetic and ethical logics by which colonial legality sustained itself in the name of order.

Janus-faced Borderscape: Complicity and Co-optation

If the FCR embodied the legal codification of frontier exceptionalism, it was the social fragmentation and moral ambiguity it engendered that gave the regime its enduring psychic force. In *The Unchosen*, Riaz Hassan crafts a narrative that neither romanticises resistance nor essentialises collaboration. Instead, the novel constructs a textured borderscape—what Henk van Houtum has termed a "Janus-faced border," a zone where inclusion and exclusion, loyalty and betrayal, legality and violence coexist in ambivalent entanglement (van Houtum, 2005). This figuration is crucial: the novel does not present the tribal borderland as a binary space but as a threshold of contradiction, where survival demands decisions that defy moral clarity.

The character arcs of Abdul Hakim Khan, Murad Khan, Abdul Rehman, and Habibullah illustrate the complex positionalities forged by frontier governmentality. Abdul Hakim, the narrative's moral centre, is not immune to complicity. He reflects: "I was appointed as a member of the jirga… this was the British strategy to subdue us from within" (Hassan 74). His admission is not self-congratulatory but freighted with unease. As a jirga member, he operates within a legal framework he knows to be colonial in design, yet must negotiate for the protection of his community. The border he inhabits is both territorial and ethical—he straddles the role of elder and intermediary, insurgent and functionary.

Similarly, the figure of Abdul Rehman complicates the narrative of resistance. While Hakim accuses him of cowardice for negotiating with the British, Rehman responds with painful clarity: "You call me coward… but how many funerals can you afford to attend before you ask what life is for?" (Hassan, qtd. in original chapter). His defence is not ideological but existential. In this formulation, negotiation is not surrender but a mode of strategic endurance. The novel thus disrupts the colonial stereotype of tribal nobility by presenting a more fractured spectrum of political response—one conditioned by fatigue, coercion, and the erosion of moral vocabulary.

Nowhere is this fragmentation more evident than in the figure of Habibullah, who chooses to serve in the British army. He earns commendations, wears the Queen's insignia, and salutes her flag, yet upon his return "no longer looked us in the eyes" (Hassan, qtd. in original chapter). His estrangement is not enforced by others but emanates from a kind of internal exile—a psychic dislocation that reveals the cost of imperial incorporation. He belongs nowhere, suspended between the symbolic orders of tribe and empire. The Janus-faced border, in this instance, becomes a mirror of divided selves: loyalty as performance, betrayal as survival.

The Unchosen refuses to stabilise these contradictions into moral judgement. It offers instead what van Houtum describes as a "borderland ontology"—a condition in which the subject is continuously negotiated across shifting lines of identity and power (van Houtum 132). Even Abdul Hakim's defiance is not heroic in the conventional sense. He operates within the very networks he critiques. He accepts stipends, bargains for favours,

and leverages his role within the jirga, all while mourning the loss of tribal honour and unity. His is a politics of pragmatic resistance, one haunted by compromise.

This fractured ethics also unfolds in the domestic sphere. Murad Khan, a fiery orator who derides the elders' compliance, is revealed to be impotent when leadership demands more than rhetoric. Hakim observes: "He shouted in the jirga and disappeared during the raid. Words came easy to him; duty did not" (Hassan 90). The juxtaposition of speech and action, bravado and retreat, underscores the theme of dislocated masculinity. Even anti-imperial resistance, when filtered through unchecked ego and performative zeal, becomes part of the problem. The novel thus critiques not only the imperial order but also the internal patriarchal structures that mirror its hierarchies and exclusions.

Women in *The Unchosen* experience this Janus-faced borderscape differently. They are rarely the decision-makers, yet they endure the consequences of decisions made in their name. When Hakim's wife confronts him after their home is raided and their son abducted, she asks: "Will your pride bring him back?"—a question that remains unanswered. Later, when Hakim scolds his son, he lashes out at his wife: "Your mother has brought you up badly…" (Hassan 106). These moments expose the gendered cost of both colonial repression and tribal honour codes. Women are not merely peripheral victims; they are repositories of pain and symbols onto which male frustrations are projected. The silence of the women in the novel is not passive but enforced—an eloquent indictment of patriarchal and colonial logics alike.

As Rasib Mehmood notes, "the tribal world of *The Unchosen* is not monolithic but conflicted, shaped by competing ideologies of honour, pragmatism, and fear" (Mehmood 178). The novel's critical strength lies in its refusal to provide redemptive narratives. It stages border subjectivity not as a coherent identity but as a fractured condition produced by overlapping regimes of power. This is a space where one can be both insurgent and informant, elder and intermediary, protector and collaborator. And it is this multiplicity that constitutes the novel's most incisive engagement with colonial governmentality—not through denunciation, but through the slow revelation of how the border corrupts even the most intimate forms of relation.

By reconfiguring the border not as a line but as a space of overlapping and often conflicting demands, *The Unchosen* extends the analytic terrain of border theory into the

realm of affect and everyday life. It shows how imperial tactics of divide and rule were not only administrative but emotional, how indirect rule produced not just fractured polities but fragmented selves. The novel's contribution, then, is to render legible the ethical grey zones of colonial modernity—zones where political loyalty cannot be disentangled from moral injury, and where the language of resistance itself is shaped by the very violence it seeks to oppose.

Border Poetics and the Narrative Aesthetics of Exception

In *The Unchosen*, the confrontation with colonial violence is not only thematic but formal. The novel resists linear narration, coherent temporality, and monologic authority. Instead, it constructs a fragmented borderscape of memory, testimony, and silences that mirrors the disorienting experience of life under the legal and psychological regime of the Frontier Crimes Regulation. This narrative strategy aligns with what Johan Schimanski and Stephen Wolfe term *border poetics*—a mode of literary engagement in which the border functions not merely as a setting or theme but as a structural and symbolic force shaping the form, ethics, and politics of the narrative itself (Schimanski & Wolfe, 2013).

Border poetics foregrounds liminality, contradiction, and in-betweenness. In *The Unchosen*, this is enacted through the splintered voice of Abdul Hakim Khan, whose memories oscillate between past and present, history and trauma, clarity and obscurity. His narration is punctuated by ellipses, omissions, and indeterminate reflections. For instance, in recalling the aftermath of a British punitive expedition, he states: "There was no sound. Even the children had forgotten how to cry. The smoke rose like questions to a God who had stopped listening" (Hassan, qtd. in original chapter). The poetic density of this sentence is not ornamental—it enacts the loss of voice, the suspension of intelligibility, the incomprehensibility of sanctioned suffering. The border here is not geographic; it is ontological.

This refusal of narrative cohesion is itself a critique of colonial historiography. British administrative archives and official reports presented the FCR as a rational, even benevolent system of governance suited to the tribal "character." In contrast, *The Unchosen* refuses such legibility. Its episodic structure, shifting perspectives, and affective dissonance operate as aesthetic refusals to reproduce the logics of imperial

documentation. This aligns with Gayatri Spivak's argument that subaltern voices cannot be simply recovered within dominant epistemes; they must often speak through silence, interruption, or refusal (Spivak, 1988). When Abdul Hakim declares, "I turned away. Everybody was trying to manipulate me… Enough of this—there would be no more explanations" (Hassan 106), he articulates a moment of narrative rupture. His silence is not passive but strategic—a rejection of the demand to translate trauma into terms intelligible to the imperial or patriarchal gaze.

The novel's poetics of memory similarly resists archival containment. As Aleida Assmann argues, memory is not a passive repository of facts but a culturally mediated process that reactivates the past in relation to the present (Assmann, 2011). Abdul Hakim's recollections are not chronologically ordered or empirically verified. They emerge in fragments—through letters, interior monologues, and encounters with landscapes scarred by imperial intrusion. These narrative forms reflect what Walter Benjamin described as the need to "seize hold of a memory as it flashes up in a moment of danger" (Benjamin, 2003, p. 255). The danger, in *The Unchosen*, is both historical and representational: the danger of forgetting, of narrating in the coloniser's idiom, of accepting the border as a given.

The inclusion of British perspectives within the novel also serves this poetic counterpoint. The fictional letters of Miss Tomlinson, for instance, offer a sanitised and patronising account of imperial "discipline," describing the public whipping of a tribal boy as an act of civilisational correction. Juxtaposed against Abdul Hakim's harrowing recollection of the same event, these documents perform a kind of contrapuntal narrative—what Edward Said would call the friction between imperial discourse and subaltern testimony (Said, 1993). The aesthetic effect is disjunctive: readers are invited to see not only what was done, but how it was narrated, legitimised, and erased.

Silence recurs as one of the novel's most potent poetic devices. Abdul Hakim frequently alludes to events he "cannot fully remember" or "has no words for"—such as the betrayal by his cousin or the death of his father. These silences are not narrative absences but ethical assertions. As border poetics insists, the limits of representation are themselves part of what the border inscribes. The impossibility of full disclosure mirrors the impossibility of justice under the state of exception. Giorgio Agamben theorises this

zone as one in which legal norms are suspended and bare life becomes exposed to unchecked sovereign power (Agamben, 2005). In *The Unchosen*, this condition is represented not through legal theory but through broken sentences, deferred disclosures, and narrative gaps.

In this sense, *The Unchosen* is not merely a novel about the border—it is a border text. It occupies a liminal space between history and fiction, testimony and imagination, law and life. Its formal structure embodies the very contradictions it seeks to expose. As Schimanski notes, "border poetics explores the margins of representation, the thresholds where meaning becomes unstable, and where alternative orders of experience become thinkable" (Schimanski, 2010). In narrating the lived and affective aesthetics of frontier legality, Hassan's novel produces precisely such an alternative order—one that privileges ambiguity over closure, fragmentation over synthesis, and memory over mastery.

By enacting these aesthetic choices, *The Unchosen* resists both colonial historiography and postcolonial nostalgia. It does not offer a redemptive narrative of tribal honour, nor a unified counter-history. Instead, it presents the experience of colonial legality as a condition of interpretive and ethical instability. This instability is not a flaw but the novel's formal response to the historical condition of life on the imperial border—a life lived in the shadow of exception, surveillance, and silence.

Conclusion

Riaz Hassan's *The Unchosen* offers a profound literary intervention into the political, legal, and affective architecture of British colonial rule in the North-West Frontier. By narrating the imperial frontier not as a line on a map but as a lived and contested borderscape, the novel dismantles the discursive and juridical foundations upon which the British erected their rule—particularly through the Frontier Crimes Regulation. In reimagining the FCR not as a mere administrative innovation but as a legal technology of dispossession, fragmentation, and exception, *The Unchosen* discloses the psychic and social violence embedded in colonial governance.

This article has argued that the novel constructs a Janus-faced borderscape, in which resistance and complicity, memory and silence, survival and betrayal coexist in unresolved tension. It achieves this not through overt ideological assertion, but through

a poetics of narrative rupture, testimonial ambiguity, and structural fragmentation. Abdul Hakim Khan's voice is not merely a subaltern counternarrative—it is a medium through which the legacies of colonial law, patriarchal authority, and imperial cartography are rendered audible, vulnerable, and incomplete. His silences, contradictions, and recollections expose the impossibility of coherence under the conditions of frontier governmentality.

Through its engagement with *border poetics* (Schimanski), *frontier governmentality* (Hopkins), the *state of exception* (Agamben), and the *Janus-faced border* (van Houtum), the novel invites a rethinking of how imperial legality functions not simply as an instrument of control but as a regime of intelligibility. It shows how the FCR, far from being a peripheral policy, was central to the colonial strategy of ruling through exception while denying responsibility. It operated by co-opting indigenous systems, displacing blame, and transforming honour into suspicion.

Importantly, *The Unchosen* resists both imperial triumphalism and postcolonial romanticism. It does not portray the tribal world as a site of pure resistance nor the colonial state as an omnipotent monolith. Instead, it captures the disorientation, exhaustion, and fractured agency that define the lives of those caught within overlapping structures of law, kinship, and violence. In doing so, it demonstrates that the most effective critique of empire may not lie in counter-conquest or narrative certainty, but in exposing the fault lines, silences, and betrayals that empire bequeaths to its margins.

To read *The Unchosen* is to confront the affective and historical residue of a legal order that has long outlasted the empire that birthed it. The FCR remained in place well into the twenty-first century, haunting Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas until its formal repeal in 2018. Hassan's novel, written decades earlier, anticipates this reckoning. It offers not closure, but a reckoning with the scars of legality—scars that are not just political but literary, ethical, and memorial.

By staging the frontier as a narrative borderscape, *The Unchosen* compels literary scholars, historians, and legal theorists alike to reconsider how law writes itself into the psyche of place and how fiction, in turn, can unwrite its certainties.

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